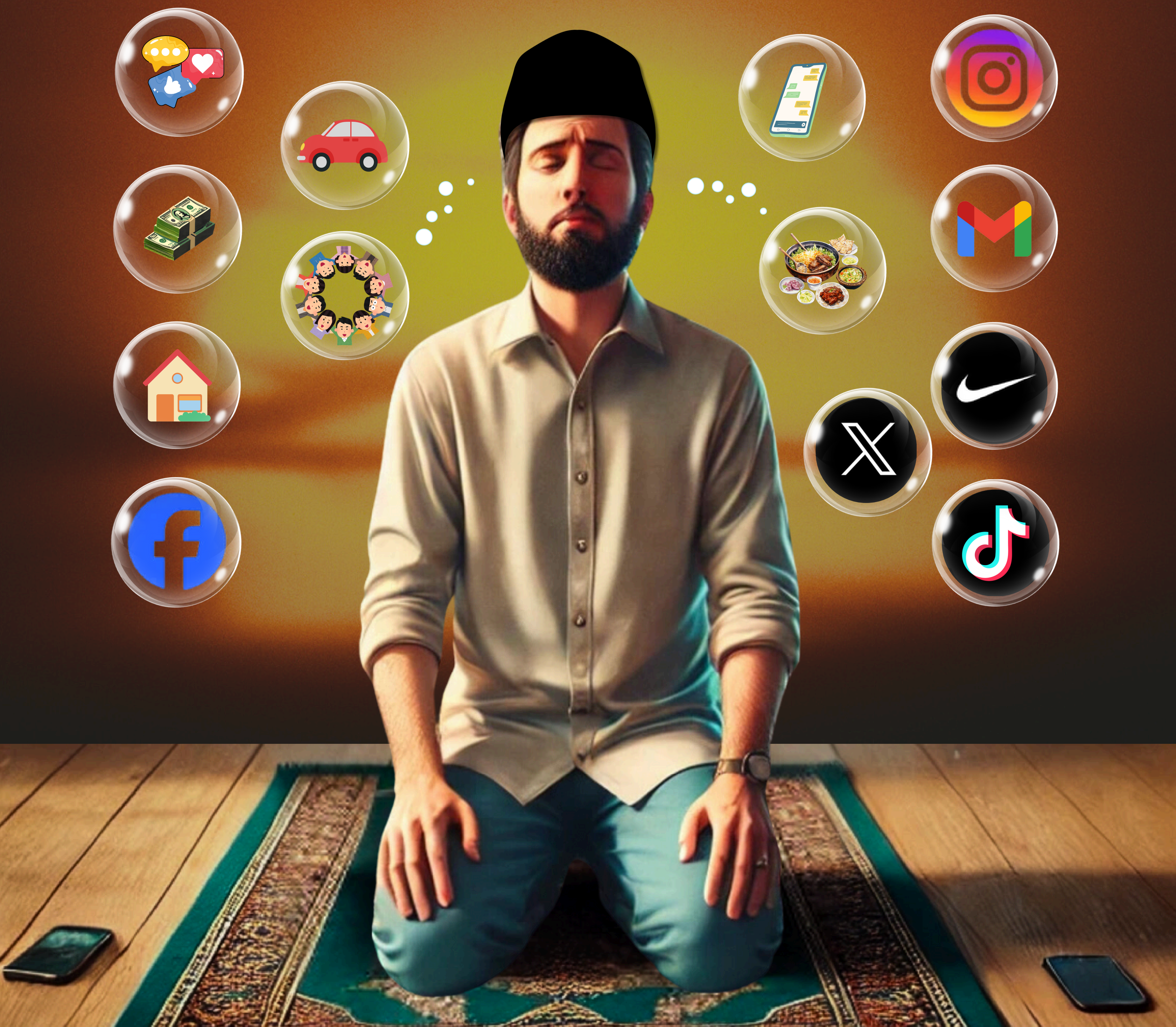
A PUBLICATION OF MKAC
NOVEMBER 2024

AN NIDA

STRUGGLING TO PRAY?



AN-NIDA
MAGAZINE

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THE HOLY QUR'AN

وَجَاهِدُوْا فِی اللّٰهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهٖ ؕ هُوَ اجْتَبٰىكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِی الدِّيْنِ مِنْ
حَرَجٍ ؕ مِلَّةَ اَبِيْكُمْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ؕ هُوَ سَمّٰىكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ۙ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِیْ هٰذَا لِيَكُوْنَ
الرَّسُوْلُ شَهِيْدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ ۖۚ فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ
وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ ؕ هُوَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۚ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ ۝٧٩

AND STRIVE IN THE CAUSE OF ALLAH AS IT BEHOVES YOU TO STRIVE FOR IT. HE HAS CHOSEN YOU, AND HAS LAID NO HARDSHIP UPON YOU IN RELIGION; SO FOLLOW THE FAITH OF YOUR FATHER ABRAHAM; HE NAMED YOU MUSLIMS BOTH BEFORE AND IN THIS BOOK, SO THAT THE MESSENGER MAY BE A WITNESS OVER YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY BE WITNESSES OVER MANKIND. THEREFORE OBSERVE PRAYER AND PAY THE ZAKAT, AND HOLD FAST TO ALLAH. HE IS YOUR MASTER. AN EXCELLENT MASTER AND AN EXCELLENT HELPER!

(THE HOLY QUR'AN, 22:79)

HADITH

THE HOLY PROPHET (SA) SAID:

"INDEED THE FIRST DEED BY WHICH A SERVANT WILL BE CALLED TO ACCOUNT ON THE DAY OF RESURRECTION IS HIS SALAT. IF IT IS COMPLETE, HE IS SUCCESSFUL AND SAVED, BUT IF IT IS DEFECTIVE, HE HAS FAILED AND LOST. SO IF SOMETHING IS DEFICIENT IN HIS OBLIGATORY (PRAYERS) THEN THE LORD, MIGHTY AND SUBLIME SAYS: 'LOOK! ARE THERE ANY VOLUNTARY (PRAYERS) FOR MY WORSHIPPER?' SO WITH THEM, WHAT WAS DEFICIENT IN HIS OBLIGATORY (PRAYERS) WILL BE COMPLETED. THEN THE REST OF HIS DEEDS WILL BE TREATED LIKE THAT."

(TIRMIDHI, HADITH 413)

EXCERPT OF THE PROMISED

MESSIAH^AS

“Congregational prayer [...] is for unity so that all those offering Salat be counted as one unit. The philosophy, underlying the instruction that all should stand together, is that those who are more enlightened may strengthen the lesser ones by infusing their light in them. [...] Those from one ward should offer congregational Prayers in the mosque of their locality five times a day. That will lead to mutual exchange of morals and intermixing of spiritual light thereby removing all weaknesses. It will also create fellowship and mutual love [...] that being the basis for unity.”

(Malfuzat Vol. 4 p 101)

GUIDANCE FROM HAZRAT KHALIFATUL MASIH V^AA^

“In order to safeguard oneself from sin, the congregational Salat is like the example of mounting pickets at the frontier. This is the army that stands guard in order to save one from the attacks of Satan. Once a person is saved from sin, their attention will subsequently be drawn towards virtuous deeds. It is also for this reason that the Holy Prophet (sa) has stated that the reward for observing Salat in congregation is twenty-seven times greater than offering it individually.” (Friday Sermon, 20th January 2017)

“Where congregational Salat is a physical demonstration of the unity which Allah Almighty wants to establish in the Ummah, it also allows one to adopt the virtuous influences of others.

When those who carry out a far greater number of virtuous deeds and are far superior in spirituality share the same line [in prayer] as those who are weaker than them, then surely those who are weak will take on their virtuous influence. Subsequently, they too will grow stronger when it comes to excelling in virtuous deeds and increasing in spirituality. When this unity is established and spirituality increases, then the satanic forces become weak. In this era, Allah Almighty has sent the true servant of the Holy Prophet (sa), who has guided us so we can acquire a true understanding of worship and Salat. Therefore, on the one hand we claim to have accepted the true servant of the Holy Prophet (sa), the Promised Messiah and Mahdi (as) in order to improve our spiritual condition and establish unity. However, on the other hand, if there are deficiencies in our practise, particularly in relation to the basic commandments of Islam, and we show weakness in that which is the very objective of our lives and we show weakness even in the basic requirements that Allah Almighty has prescribed for us to achieve, then how can we claim that in order to better our spirituality and adhere to the injunctions of Allah Almighty we have accepted the Promised Messiah (as) by obeying the instructions of the Holy Prophet (sa)?” (Friday Sermon, 20th January 2017)

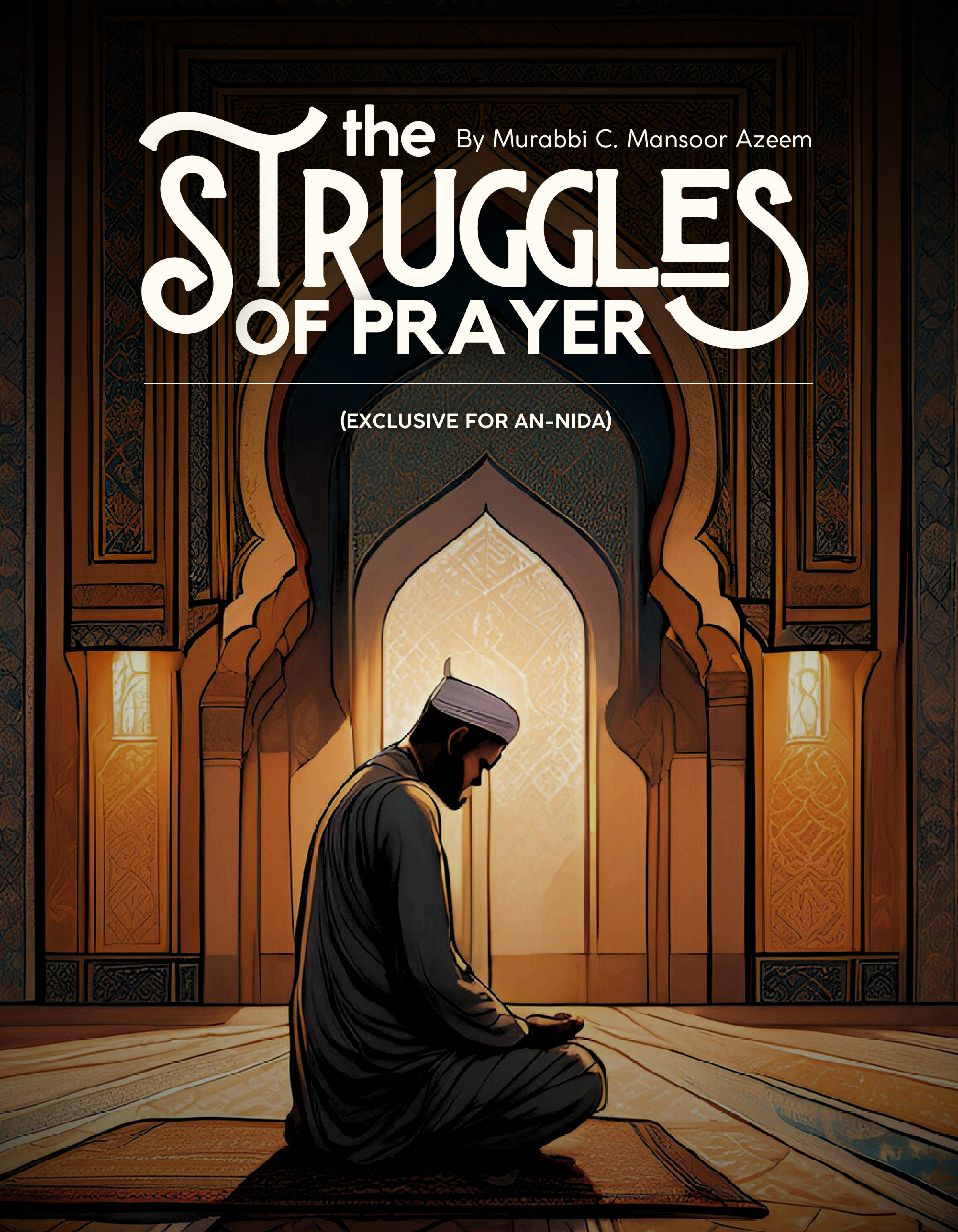
**I AM NEAR
I ANSWER THE
PRAYER
OF THE SUPPLICANT
WHEN HE PRAYS TO ME**

(2:186)

the STRUGGLES OF PRAYER

By Murabbi C. Mansoor Azeem

(EXCLUSIVE FOR AN-NIDA)



WRESTLING THE ALARM CLOCK

A few days ago, I realized that even though I know that Salat is essential and that I'll be held accountable for it on the Day of Resurrection, this is the first thing, I'll be asked on that day, but the effort it takes to actually get up, do Wuzu/ablution, head to the car, (and the entire snow removal process in the winters) and drive to the mosque can often feel overwhelming.

My daily routine starts with the synchronized alarms on my phone on one side of the bed, my wife's phone on the other side of the bed, and the HomePod all the way across, “100s” of alarms start at 6:00 am, 6:05 am 6:10 am… and I am, either scrambling to find the phones or, if I've placed them far away, struggling to silence them through Siri, her voice recognition is so “helpful” especially in the early hours, that I often have to say in different accents, different voices to make her realize its me trying to ask her to silence the alarms. This morning struggle is what usually wakes me up!

And, of course, it's always tough to get up in the middle of a favourite show or sports, right when the Raptors are finally winning, or while Auston Matthews is on the ice with the Leafs in the lead, and leave for the mosque. It takes a lot of willpower and energy just to get up and go. You get what I mean though, the struggle of prayer is real! So many of us deal with it everyday and yet we rarely talk about it.

NOTHING ESCAPES THE BLACK HOLE

Today, countless distractions, social media, TV, mindless scrolling, work stress, games, and more, act like attention-seeking, soul-draining black holes. They pull in everything: our minds, attention, focus, leaving us feeling stressed, frustrated, moody, and drained of willpower. Though we try to break free with all our might, the gravitational pull of these distractions often feels too strong to resist. The Holy Prophet (sa) has guided us to safeguard ourselves from these distractions, he said:

“Both Halal and Haram things are evident but in between them there are doubtful (suspicious) things and most of the people have no knowledge about them. So whoever saves himself from these doubtful/ suspicious things saves his religion and his honour. And whoever indulges in these suspicious things is like a shepherd who grazes (his animals) near the Hima (private pasture) of someone else and at any moment he is liable to get in it. (O people!) Beware! Every king has a Hima and the Hima of Allah on the earth is His Haram (forbidden) things.” The Holy Prophet (sa) has instructed us to keep a safe distance from activities that could lead us to fall into wrongdoing.

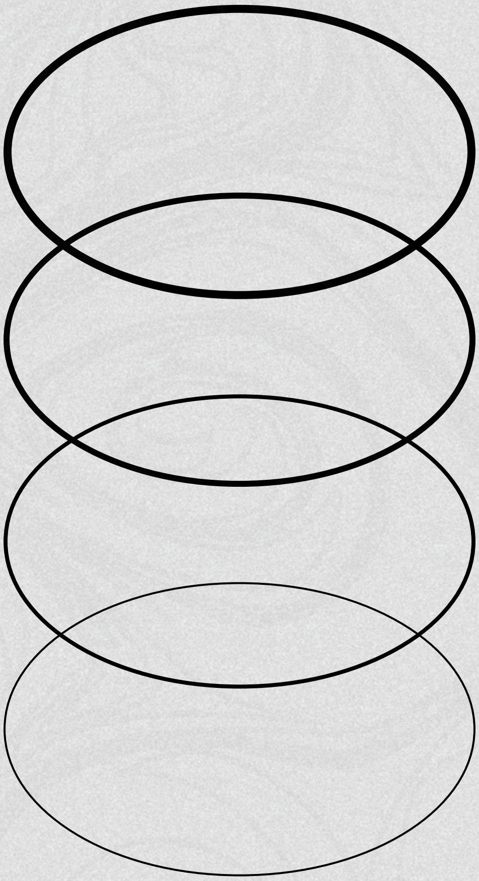
FLEXING
THE MUSCLES

As we have learnt, its hard, struggling to go to the mosque to offer prayers. But so are many other things, like the first step that we took, the first time we rode a bike, the first time we drove a car, and many more accomplishments that we learnt our way up. No one is able to do heavy deadlifts, or chest presses or have a 6 pack on day 1 of the gym.

We constantly have to train our body from smaller weights to the heavier ones to have those muscles. If that is the case with the physical body, then why not with the spiritual body, the soul? How can we strengthen our soul, how can we flex our spiritual muscles to bear the burden and overcome the struggles of offering prayers?

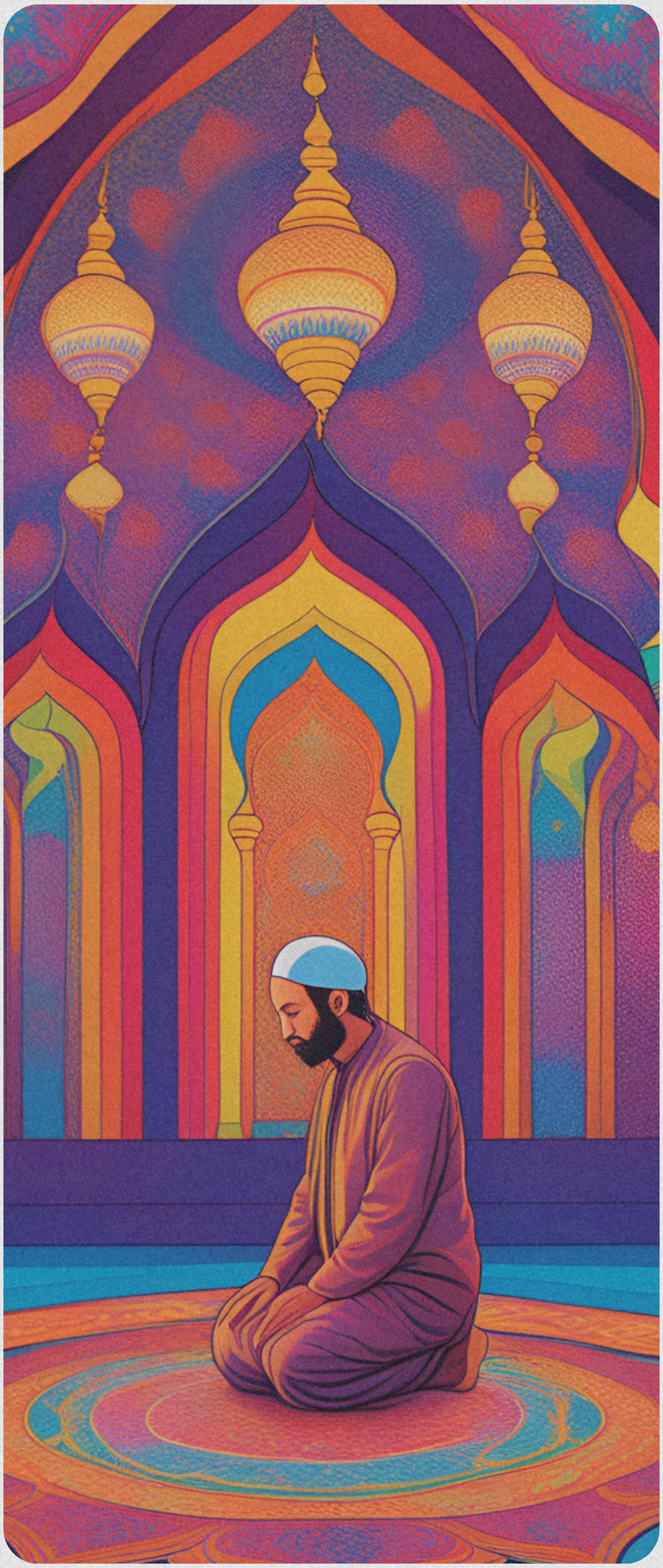
PRIORITIES

SET YOUR PRIORITIES RIGHT



In our life, we naturally prioritize those who are closer to us. When randomly, a complete stranger asks for any help, especially something significant like money, we might feel hesitant and decline, even if we technically have the means. But if the request comes from a family member or a close and dear friend, we don't think twice; even if we have to borrow, we're willing to go the extra mile to support them.

This instinct to serve and sacrifice for loved ones comes from the bond we share with them. It's a connection built over the years, filled with mutual trust, shared experiences, and a deep sense of responsibility. For the people we care about, we willingly set aside our own comfort and give what we have, knowing they would do the same for us.



Our relationship with Allah can be like this, too. When we build a deep, personal connection with Him, the nature of our response would definitely change. Just as we wouldn't hesitate to support a loved one, a strong bond with Allah moves us to prioritize worship without hesitation. The call to prayer becomes like a call from someone dear; we no longer see it as an interruption to our plans or leisure but as an honour and a moment to be with someone who truly knows us in that state of closeness, we're willing to sacrifice without feeling a sense of loss.

Whether it's a favourite show, a night of sleep, or time spent elsewhere, nothing feels more valuable than that connection with Allah. We feel a unique fulfillment, and in that relationship, every act of worship is a cherished meeting. So, just as we naturally respond to loved ones with eagerness and commitment, a close relationship with Allah cultivates in us the same love and devotion, making our worship not a duty, but a privilege we wouldn't miss for anything.

HOW TO GET ALONG?

We're experts when it comes to knowing the little things about the people we care about. Think about it—when it comes to friends, we know who's into what sport, which foods they won't touch (or can't, thanks to allergies), their go-to restaurant, and even which teams they're cheering for. And when it comes to our spouses, we know their favourite perfume, the outfits they love to see us wear, and which colours they think look best on us. These details come naturally because we spend time, listen, and remember what makes them tick.

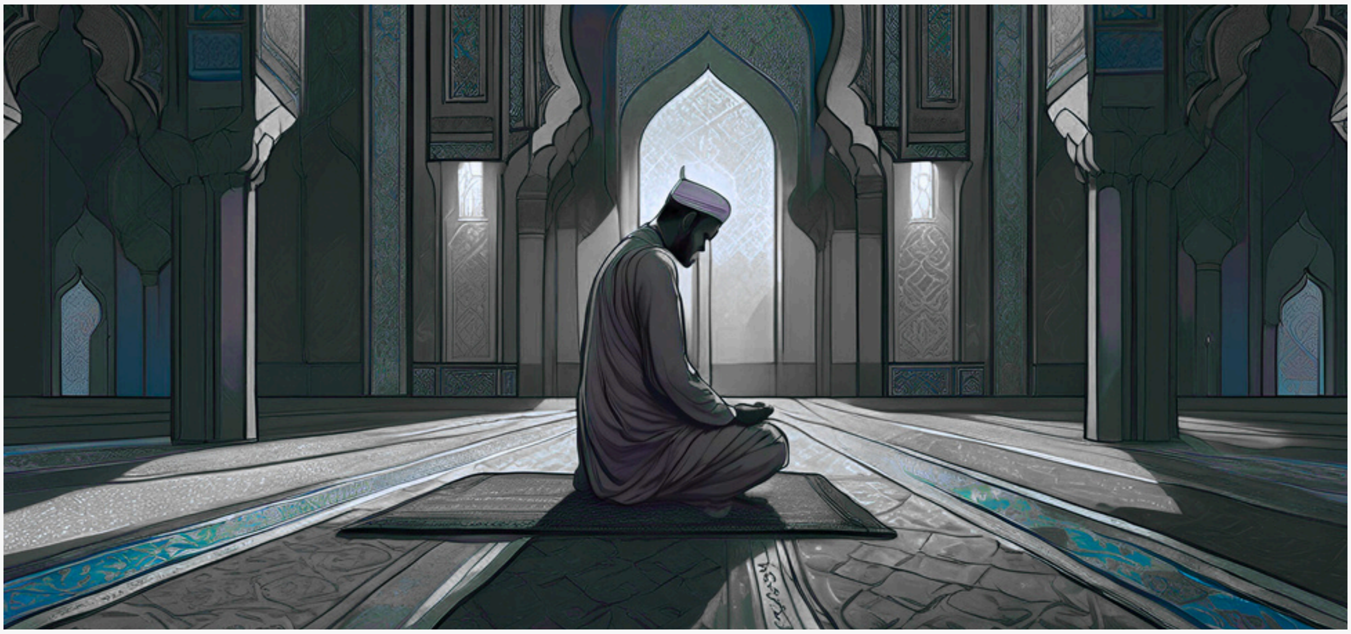
The same approach applies to forming a deep, meaningful connection with Allah. To truly know Allah, we start by learning His attributes, understanding the qualities He is known by, and calling on Him through His names. Just as we understand what our friends and family love, we can learn what Allah loves, the actions He encourages, and what He dislikes. Through this knowledge, our prayers become more personal, grounded in a genuine relationship with Him. When we know who Allah is, what He does, how He responds, and who He loves from His servants, we're not just going through motions in worship (Ruku, Sajda, sitting, standing, bowing etc.) instead, we're building a bond, knowing Him and feeling known in return. Just as we effortlessly show up for our loved ones, we'll find ourselves drawn closer to Allah, connecting on a level that feels just as natural and fulfilling.

THE STRUGGLES OF PRAYER - CONTINUED

HELP
HELP
HELP
HELP
IS AN ASK AWAY
HELP

Once a wise scholar asked his student: “Imagine a dear friend of yours, invites you over for a dinner” the scholar said. “You get ready, put on nice clothes, wear nice perfume, follow the directions, and arrive at his door. But just as you’re about to enter, a fierce dog appears, barking and growling, blocking your way. What would you do?” The student thought for a moment and replied, “I’d try to calm the dog down. Maybe I can tame him.” “But what if the dog refuses to be tamed?” the scholar asked, raising an eyebrow. “I’d try to distract him with something so I could slip inside,” the student responded confidently. “And what if he’s too smart to be distracted?” the scholar pressed. The student hesitated, then suggested, “I guess I’d look for another door, maybe the back door.”

Sometimes, no matter how hard we try to connect with Allah, we feel distracted, discouraged, and cut off by that barking.” He continued, “But when we find ourselves unable to tame or avoid these distractions, that’s when we should turn to Allah Himself and ask for His help. Just as you’d call the host to deal with his dog, we can seek Allah’s help to silence Satan’s distractions. The scholar nodded, “But what if the dog rushes there too, blocking you yet again?” A bit frustrated, the student admitted, “Well, after all I could try, if the dog still wouldn’t let me in, I’d call the host and ask him to handle his dog, so I could come inside.” The scholar smiled, “Exactly. That’s the answer. You see, Allah is like the host in this story, and Satan is like the dog, barking and blocking our path whenever we try to draw closer.



Allah, as our host, is always willing to welcome us in, and He is more than able to handle whatever stands in our way. Sometimes, all we need to do is ask.” Through this story, the scholar showed his student that no matter how distant Allah may feel, He’s always just one call away. And sometimes, calling on Him is exactly what we need to finally find the peace and connection we’re seeking. We can dial His number, pray to Him in our prayers, in Surah Fatiha by repeating, اياک نعبد و اياک نستعين that O God, to You we pray, but we are weak, and we implore for Your help, so we can pray without any distractions. This is what Allah hints toward in the following verse: “And when My servants ask thee about Me, say: ‘I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me. So they should hearken to Me and believe in Me, that they may follow the right way.”

STORY OF A

KHADIM

Once a person like you and me, after hearing a sermon or a Dars at the mosque got his heart full of love for Allah and a sincere desire to live a life that has daily prayers in it. Due to this powerful sermon of Huzoor, he felt so devoted and so inspired that he made a solemn pledge to Allah: that "From this day forward, I will never miss a prayer and no matter what happens, I will offer the prayer even if it is life and death situation for me." For the next 2-3 days, he kept his promise.

He made sure nothing interrupted his prayers, there were many distractions in his way, of his regular life, but each time he stood before Allah in his prayers, he felt a unique warmth, a sense of closeness to Allah. That warmth, sense of closeness, that inner peace kept him going, but life, as it does, started getting in the way. A day came when work ran late; his thoughts got distracted, hardly, but he managed to pray. But couldn't find the same warmth, the same peace. Next day, he was exhausted, and before he knew it, he missed a prayer.

Although, he deliberately missed that prayer, due to his weakness, too tired that night or just got distracted with family and friends etc. but afterwards, he regretted it, and his heart sank. Embarrassment and guilt weighed on him. “I shouldn't have done that, I shouldn't have missed the prayer” he thought. In the coming days, he felt ashamed to return to Allah. As though he had let Him down, he had let himself down. We have experienced it, that if we feel guilty towards someone, we try to avoid them. But this person, after a lot of inner struggle, he gathered his courage, stood up to pray, and sought forgiveness for his absence, for the sin that he has committed, and longed for the same inner peace, warmth and comfort that he used to have in the prayers. He poured out his regret, renewing his promise to never miss a prayer again. And with that, he felt a sense of relief, a reassurance in his heart that Allah has listened to his prayers and his inner peace returned.

Days went by, and he found himself stumbling again. Once more, he missed a prayer, and then another. Each time, the embarrassment grew stronger. “What’s the point of returning to Allah when I keep failing” he thought. But he remembered his pledge, and the promise he’d made to always turn back to his Creator. For that feeling of comfort and peace he returned again and stumbled again. So, with every stumble, he went back to Allah, did, “Istighfar”, his heart more humbled than before. He cried, wept tears, confessing his weakness and praying for strength to stay true to his promise. He was honest with Allah about his struggles, admitting how hard it was, how he tried but kept falling short.

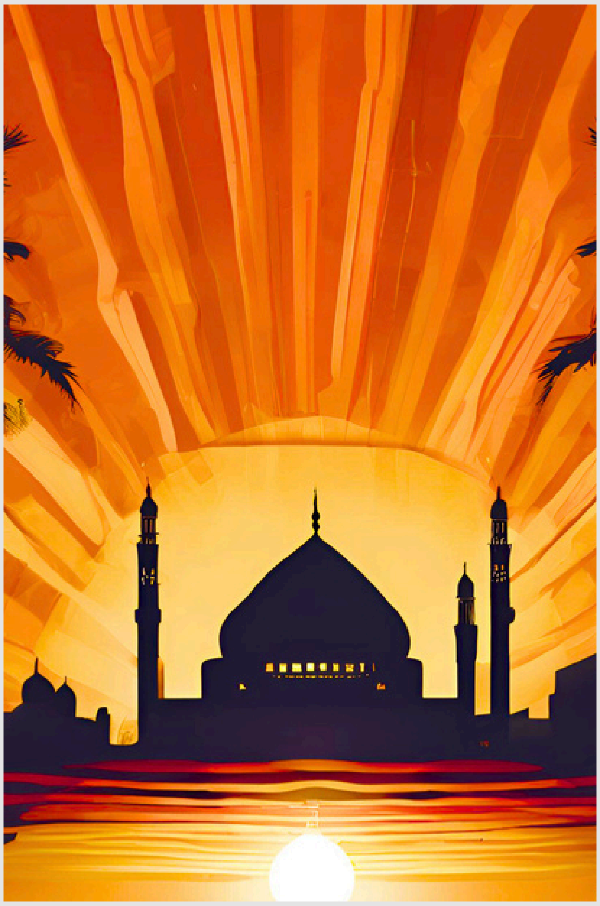
Due to weeping and crying and shedding tears, he felt something he hadn’t felt before, an even deeper comfort. He realized that, even in his repeated failures, Allah had always welcomed him back. Those moments of “Istighfar” had washed away layers of guilt, leaving his heart cleaner, more at peace each time.

FUEL

FUEL THAT RUNS THE SPIRITUAL ENGINE

This cycle of breaking and returning, of falling and rising, is where the beauty of Istighfar lies. Each time you turn back to Allah, it's an act of humility and faith. While shame might tempt you to avoid His presence, Istighfar calls you back, reminding you that there is nowhere else to go. Only Allah can forgive, and He loves it when His servant returns, acknowledging their mistakes, their weaknesses, and renewing that promise, no matter how many times it takes. With each tear you shed in Istighfar, you're washing away the heaviness of guilt and regret, clearing the mind of distractions and filling the heart with peace. Those tears connect you to Allah in a way that words alone cannot. They cleanse the heart, dissolving the burdens you carry and drawing you ever closer to Him.

Istighfar isn't just about erasing the past; it's about fortifying your spirit to keep moving forward. It's an act of spiritual renewal, a reminder that every time you fall, you have the chance to rise even stronger. And in those moments of sincere Istighfar, you'll find a comfort, a closeness to Allah, unlike anything else. It is narrated that event the Holy Prophet (sa) used to seek forgiveness, understanding the true concept of Istighfar. It is narrated, The Holy Prophet (SA) said "By Allah, I seek Allah's forgiveness and repent to Him more than seventy times a day." Once he (sa) said:



"Verily, Allah is more pleased with the repentance of His slave than a person who has his camel in a waterless desert carrying his provision of food and drink and it is lost. He, having lost all hopes (to get that back), lies down in shade and is disappointed about his camel; when all of a sudden he finds that camel standing before him. He takes hold of its reins and then out of boundless joy blurts out: 'O Allah, You are my slave and I am Your Rubb'. He commits this mistake out of extreme joy"

May Allah grant us the strength and dedication to approach our prayers with sincerity and devotion, and may our hearts be filled with comfort, tranquility and peace through His remembrance. Āmīn!

DESPAIR NOT OF THE MERCY OF ALLAH

(12:88)

PICKING YOUR ROLE MODELS

Michael Jordan. Cristiano Ronaldo. These are just two of the many names that are universally known, regardless of which part of the world you go to or who you encounter. For many youths, these may be their role models – who they aspire to be when they get older. Aside from accumulating mass wealth through their athletic gift, can you identify what else has been their contribution to society? Not much. Yet, how many people can you think of that follow their every move? There are many such people influenced by celebrities and athletes almost to the point of obsession. That is why picking a role model is such a key element in one's life, particularly at a younger age.

Currently, there is a global trend of materialism. People are not satisfied with what they have or had. We see many people around us, whether it be friends, family, or society in general, that are engulfed in materialism. They have a hunger for more material goods but that thirst is never quenched.

This is no different for the celebrities and athletes we idolize. It is very tough not to be materialistic given the lifestyle and environment they are operating in. We are living in that age that is so far removed from when Islam was established, both from a time and spiritual perspective. With so many evil influences around us, it is important to carefully choose who you want to make your role model. who you decide to follow and aspire to be. If you do have a role model in mind, you should also analyze who are they following and looking to for guidance.

As Ahmadi Muslims, we are fortunate. We have been granted an exemplary role model in Khalifatul Masih (May Allah be his Helper). Someone who seeks no worldly gain but simply the pleasure of Allah the Almighty. Someone who holds divinely guided power yet remains humble and considers himself weak. Someone who controls an army of millions, yet the only weapon he has prescribed is prayers. You will be hard pressed to find any worldly influential figure with such characteristics. Or any such figure who is advocating for peace in the world and for the rights of the oppressed. How many of our so-called role models have been silent while Palestinians have been oppressed? Likely due to a fear of a loss in their wealth. Yet, how many times has Khalifatul Masih advised openly that we should continue to advocate for their rights?

If you search the qualities of a good role model, it includes empathy and humility. I can comfortably say Huzoor (aa) possesses these and many, many more.

I HAVE FOUND MY ROLE MODEL.
WHY ARE YOU STILL SEARCHING FOR YOURS?

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